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ROOTING THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN CHINESE SOIL

An Address

by

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THE Henry W. Luce Visiting Professorship of World Christianity was made possible by gifts from Mr. Henry R. Luce and from the Henry Luce Foundation, in memory of Mr. Luce's father, the Reverend Henry Winters Luce, a student of Union Seminary in the class of 1895 and an outstanding leader in the development of higher education in China. Dr. Luce was largely responsible for the organization of Shantung Christian University in Tsinan, and later for the erection of Yenching University in Peiping, of which he was vice-president from 1920 to 1928. He was a leader in the movement for coordination of Christian higher education in China which led to the forming of the Associated Boards for Christian Colleges in China in 1932. After his retirement from missionary service in 1928, Dr. Luce served as Professor of Oriental History and Religions at the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford, Connecticut. During the ten years preceding his death in 1941, Dr. Luce was active in promoting the education of American religious leaders in the cultural and historical aspects of Asiatic civilizations, and he was especially interested in the interchange of students and professors between the East and the West.

Rooting The Christian Church in Chinese Soil

Francis C. M. Wei

This New Age and the Chair of World Christianity

It is at least a happy coincidence that the foundation of the chair of World Christianity in Union Theological Seminary, New York, should mark the end of the Second World War. This horrible war has directed our attention anew to the spiritual power necessary to cope with the evil forces in the world, and who will deny that to say the least Christianity should be one of the spiritual forces in meeting the increasingly grave situation confronting mankind?

For a third of a century since the Edinburgh Conference of the Churches in 1910 Christians the world over have been becoming more familiar with the term World Christianity—and all that it signifies. Christianity is ecumenical. Anything short of that is not what its Founder intended. That has been the motivation of the Christian missionary movement for the past nineteen hundred years. It is the endeavor to realize this ideal that has driven the missionaries to the four corners of the world, to the far distant lands and to the numerous islands in the ocean. The world situation confronting the Church today makes imperative a world-wide plan for the Christian missionary movement. I presume that that is the motive in founding this new Chair of World Christianity of which I have the honor of being the first incumbent.

It is very appropriate also that this chair should have been founded to perpetuate the memory of the late Rev. Henry W. Luce, D.D., for many years a faithful servant of the Church of Christ in China and in his latter years a lecturer on missions in this country. Let us hope that those who come from the lands of the so-called Younger Churches from year to year to occupy this chair may contribute to a better understanding of the Christian missionary movement as a world movement and of the Christian Church as intended for, and belonging to, the whole of mankind. I further hope that the future incumbents of the chair may be better qualified than I am to lecture on World Christianity and will not feel impelled as I do to confine their attention to a section of Christendom. I use the word "Christendom" in the revised sense. But whether the attack is frontal or in detail is only a matter of strategy.

Problems Confronting Christianity and the Christian Answer

Let us, however, take a moment to remind ourselves of the situation of the present day world. We are faced with the grave alternative of remaking our civilization or losing it entirely. It is a problem of all civilized people whether in

the East or in the West. And I am not going to pause and consider how much we in China are better off than you are in the West in some respects and how much worse off we are in other respects. We are in almost the same predicament. While we were fighting in the War we had high hopes for a decent world after the victory. Now victory has been won and it is not pleasant to think that "the road back to peace will be as difficult as the road to victory." (*New York Times* quoting President Truman, October 8, 1945). Getting the victor nations to agree on the major international issues has not proved to be all smooth sailing. China is not the only country vexed by political problems. A new economic order to give abundant life to the millions has been slow in coming. We are not sure whether in any one part of the world it will come by evolution or by revolution. It is not necessary to remind an audience like this of the seriousness of the social unsettlement, the racial tension, the cultural confusion, and the moral chaos everywhere, and the religious front is not too encouraging either. These problems are too challenging to be dismissed with the simple faith that everything will come out right in the end. Walter Bagehot wants us to remember that the road to progress through the ages is strewn with the wrecks of many a culture. A. J. Toynbee in *A Study of History* counts more nations dead than those living.

What is the Christian answer to all these perplexities? We do not have in our Christian teachings the panacea for all ailments, in the individual or in society, but we believe that in our faith there is the power to overcome the world. We confess that the Christian truth is absolute, but we know that its expression is not final. The final expression cannot be reached until all the cultures embodying the best accumulated experiences of the large sections of mankind have been brought to the altar of God and offered up to Him. Indeed, the final expression of the absolute truth of Christianity can not be reached until man has grown to the full stature of Christ himself. The latter process cannot be hastened; we must wait for God's appointed time. But we may begin to bring to His service all the historic cultures of the world. Since China is one of the greatest countries, with a population of one quarter of the human race and with a history at least four thousand years long, and since "no other nation with which the world is acquainted has preserved its type so unaltered. . . . has developed a civilization so completely independent of any extraneous influence . . . has elaborated its own ideals in such absolute segregation from alien thought," would it be too presumptuous for a Chinese to suggest that we may begin the interpretation of Christianity in terms of the older cultures in the East by experimenting with the Chinese culture first?

Christianity in China

Christianity is nothing new in China. It is difficult to give the exact date when the Christian message first reached that country. I will not invite you to investigate how much or how little truth there is in the tradition that the first missionary to China was St. Thomas the Apostle. So much has been accredited to that doubting saint that we may pay him back in his own coin. But according to the famous Nestorian Tablet uncovered in 1623 or 1625 A.D. near Hsianfu,

the old capital of China, a monument erected in the year 781 A.D., the Nestorian missionary A-lo-pen arrived in the Chinese capital in 635 A.D., during the reign of the great Emperor Tai-chung of the T'ang Dynasty. The emperor regarded graciously the religion, studied it himself, and from several successors of his on the throne it received marked favor. Chinese records have it that imperial edicts were issued ordering its dissemination. Two hundred and ten years later in 845 A.D. the Buddhists in China were persecuted by the Emperor, Wu Chung, and the Nestorians, who to the Chinese at the time were merely another Buddhist sect, suffered the same fate. Buddhism was able to rise again in China very shortly, but not Nestorianism. By 987 A.D. it was reported that there were no Christians in the Chinese Empire. This ends the first chapter of the history of Christian missions in China. Nestorian Christianity became extinct in China because of persecution when it was indistinguishable from another religion. It paid heavily for losing its identity.

During the Mongol Dynasty which began in 1279 A.D. the great Khubilai Khan established in 1289 an office in his government for the supervision of Christians in China. Who were these Christians? There seem to have been some thousands of Nestorian Christians in the country at that time apparently not remnants from the earlier period. In the early part of the 14th Century they appeared in eastern China around Hangchow and Chingkiang, in the northwest in Kansu, in the north in modern Hopei, and in the southwest in Yunnan. They were known as Arkaqun, almost entirely of foreign birth. How and when they got into China is not certain. Apparently they came with the Mongol conquerors. The Mongols were in contact with the Uighurs, a Turkish people, and these people were in part Nestorians.

Nestorians, however, were not the only Christians in China under the Mongols. There were also Roman Catholic missionaries. Two Italian merchants, Maffeo and Nicolo Polo, brothers, were asked by Khubilai Khan to take letters from the Imperial Court to the Pope asking that "a hundred teachers of science and religion be sent to instruct the Chinese in the learning and faith of Europe". (Latourette, *History of Christian Missions in China*, p. 67.) The missionaries from Rome were slow in coming and not a hundred actually came. The first to arrive was John of Montecorvino, a Franciscan. More Franciscans came later to join him, and they had a good measure of success. But in 1368, the Mongol rule in China came to an end. With the foreign rulers went also the foreign missionaries. After that, says Professor Latourette, "most of such Chinese as had accepted the Faith probably apostatized once their foreign co-religionists had been expelled . . . No certain traces of the Faith were found by the Jesuits in the latter part of the 16th Century." (*Op. cit.* p. 75.) It is always dangerous for the Christian missionary movement to be too intimately allied with the political power in the country. Another chapter of the Christian movement in China was thus closed, probably for that reason.

It was closed for almost two centuries. In 1549 Francis Xavier went as a missionary to Japan. He had China also in his purview. He reached an island south of Canton in 1551 and there he made his plan for the evangelization of

China. But like Moses he did not reach the promised land, for he died on that island the next year. Later, other missionaries arrived. It was a great land to occupy for Christ. The task, however, was difficult. It is told of "Father Valigani, (an Italian Jesuit missionary) looking one day out of a window of the College of Macao toward the continent . . . calling out with a loud voice and the most intimate affection of his heart, speaking to China, 'Oh, Rock, Rock, when wilt thou open, Rock.'" (Quoted by Latourette, *Op. cit.* p. 92.)

Within a few years the Rock was split open. Jesuit missionaries entered China, among whom was the great Matteo Ricci, a mathematician and an astronomer as well as a missionary.* Scholars and high officials were won. An effort was made to reach the upper classes in Chinese society and it met with a good measure of success.

Soon the Dominicans came also and they were followed by the Augustinians. In spite of persecution the work went ahead and flourished. This third attempt to evangelize China was beginning to reap a promising harvest. Then arose the controversies among the missionaries as to the Chinese term for God, as to whether Chinese Christians should be permitted to participate in the ceremonies in honor of Confucius and in memory of the deceased ancestors, and as to whether Christians should be allowed to contribute to community festivals regarded by the missionaries as pagan, but by the Chinese as a part of their community activities. These questions were referred to the Chinese Emperor who was in favor of a broad interpretation and of the adaptation of missionary methods to the age-long Chinese practices, but Papal authority held a different opinion, and the debate raged for a whole century, with the Franciscans and Augustinians siding with the Jesuits for a liberal policy and the Dominicans taking the opposite view. The Pope's decree in 1742 ended the controversy in favor of the Dominicans, but the Emperor could not tolerate in his domain the presence of foreigners who would regard the authority of a non-Chinese ruler as superior to his own, even though that ruler was an ecclesiastical and not a political official. This was prior to the day of extraterritoriality in China. Christian missionaries were practically banned and persecutions became more severe. The Christian community declined steadily both in number and in morale, so that "in the first quarter of the 19th Century, the future of the Church," to use Professor Latourette's words, "was very dark." (*Op. cit.* p. 181). This was the Christian movement in China during the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. Success was turned into a miserable failure owing to the division among missionaries on non-essential issues.

Early in the 19th century the fourth attempt to bring Christianity to China began with the coming of Robert Morrison in 1807. In this new movement the Protestants were to play a more important part. While the missionary efforts made during the last one hundred and thirty-eight years have been richly rewarded, we must at this point pause to review whether any lessons may be learned from the failures of the earlier attempts.

* In 1582.

The Nestorians of the T'ang Dynasty and the Christians during the Mongol period have left practically no trace behind them in China except a tablet at Hsian, a few tracts unearthed from the Tun-huang grottoes, and a few casual references in the Chinese records. As far as Chinese life and thought are concerned they exerted no permanent influence. One would expect better results from the Christian endeavor in China during the period from the middle of the 16th to the end of the 18th century. In contrast with the methods used in the first two enterprises, in which no great effort was made to make a real impact upon the people or even to take Christianity outside of the very small minority group of aliens in the country, the missionaries following the footsteps of St. Francis Xavier to China adopted almost from the beginning the wise policy of reaching the upper classes in society without, however, neglecting the poor and the uneducated. They obtained permission from the Pope, at least the Jesuits did, for the use of the Chinese language by native priests in the liturgy and in the administration of the sacraments; they emphasized the similarities between Christian and Chinese beliefs and they conformed to Chinese religious practices. Christian instruction was given, sacraments were administered, books on theology, on morals and on religious virtues prepared and used, parts of the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, translated into Chinese, Chinese priests and even a Chinese bishop ordained and consecrated. But what was the result? Some souls saved, of course. Christians stood firm under severe persecution. Improvements were made in the moral and religious life of the people. But to quote Professor Latourette again, "The Church was far from having an assured part in Chinese life. . . . On China and its culture as a whole the missionaries had made almost no impression. The new faith had wrought no important modification in the ethical standards and religious ideas of the nation, and social and political institutions except among the small body of Christians, were unaltered." (*Op. cit.* pp. 195-6)

This is a severe indictment of a movement into which had gone a great deal of devoted missionary activity and consecrated life. Certainly the same indictment cannot be made of the missionary movement that has been going on in China since the early years of the 19th century, and yet aside from the Chinese Christians of the Roman Catholic Church in China, the statistics of which are differently given on different occasions, say, two million as an estimate, there are less than half a million non-Roman Catholic Chinese Christians today. Taking the two groups together we have a little over one half of one per cent of the Chinese population Christian, the non-Roman Catholics being about one-tenth of one per cent only.* Our total impact upon the nation as a whole is far greater than our numerical strength, but we are in too small a minority to feel complacent about the Church in China. How do the people regard us in the country? What is their attitude towards our Faith? Of course, these questions cannot be answered precisely, and generalities are misleading. During the war years,

* Reliable statistics in China are not available. All are estimates. The figure given of the Non-Roman Catholic Chinese Christians is the least open to question.

Christians in China, both missionaries and Chinese, have made a favorable impression upon the people as a whole and upon the government leaders in particular, not only by our refugee work and relief activities often undertaken at great risk and sometimes by supreme sacrifice of life, but also by our capacity for accepting suffering and bearing hardship in order that the right and the true may be maintained, and by our Christian faith that the righteous will triumph. We have demonstrated that Christianity has not denationalized the Chinese, but on the contrary has made them patriots in the best sense of the term. Will this impression last? At different times in the past and in different groups at any one time in the country, the attitude of the people towards the Christian Faith varies from indifference and passive aloofness at the one extreme, through sceptical curiosity and active opposition, to superficial acceptance and genuine conversion at the other. Really, no generalizations can safely be made in this respect.

Has Christianity Been Understood in China?

The more important question, however, is whether Christianity has been understood by the Chinese. Some few Chinese must have understood it. I do not refer particularly to the Chinese Christian martyrs, and there have been many such martyrs in various periods of severe persecution. I honor martyrs. But fanatics of other faiths have laid down their lives with great heroism for truths which they only faintly comprehended, nay, they have laid down their lives for what has turned out later to be falsehood. Intelligent and highly trained Chinese have embraced the Christian Faith, but intelligence in some special field does not necessarily imply intelligence in matters religious. In the presentation of the Christian good news to the Chinese by preachers in China we hear a confusion of tongues. Once the president of a national university asked me whether there was anything in Christian teachings on which Christians could all agree. It is not fair to lay the blame at the door of "denominationalism" alone. Assume that we have a message common to all the Christian groups in China; can we present it intelligently and effectively to the Chinese people without putting them through a course of theological training which would certainly require as a prerequisite the mastery of a Western language, adequate knowledge of Western history and sociology, and above all understanding of Western idiosyncrasy? Please do not misunderstand me here. I have no intention to deprecate the rich Christian experience of the Church in the West, in Europe and in America, or even to undervalue it. On the contrary I treasure it highly as the priceless legacy of the Church Universal, in which we in China long to share. But we can share it and make the most of it, only when it is put within the reach of our comprehension, by making it speak in our language.

Let me illustrate my point by a trivial instance. The Creed has the phrase "the right hand of God". It is literally translated into Chinese. Of course, "right hand" is just "right hand". The Chinese understand it. But "right hand" in that phrase in the Creed is not right hand for us in China. The right hand seat is not the seat of the highest honor in China, which is at the left hand. You may

say it is simple enough to translate "right hand" in the Creed into "left hand" in Chinese. But that would not get the idea across. This, however, is triviality. There are more complicated and more important issues at stake.

Nor do I refer to the language alone. The whole cultural background has to be considered, all the thought-forms, the way of thinking, the method of approach, philosophy, religion, art, social structure. Change all that, I can hear some of you say. I hope only *some* of you; others would say otherwise with me. After all, we are there in the Church in China to bring the Chinese to Christ, to bring them nearer to God, to help them to know, to love and serve Him, not to teach them to eat with fork and knife instead of eating with chop-sticks. We are concerned indeed with personal hygiene, but in preaching the good news of Jesus Christ that is not the first concern. In Christ there is no fork and knife or chop-sticks.

Chinese Culture and Christianity.

Pardon this digression and let us return to the main question. Is it possible to interpret Christian teachings in Chinese thought-forms, to give expression to Christian faith in terms of Chinese culture? No, not adequately. But neither can we adequately interpret the Christian teachings in the thought-forms of any other people or give full expression to our Faith in terms of any other culture. That is why the present interpretation of the Christian teachings and the expression of our Christian faith have been so inadequate and so incomplete. I would repeat that until the cultures of all the historic peoples, whether in the East or in the West, have been brought in and laid at the altar of God the Almighty, and until man has grown to the full stature of Christ His Son, our interpretation of the Christian teachings and our expression of the Christian faith are bound to be inadequate and incomplete and therefore unsatisfactory to many. We must pray that the Holy Spirit guide us progressively into all Truth. Even Kraemer has to admit that "empirical Christianity belongs to the relative sphere of history," and is therefore not absolute, still less final.*

In our attempt to interpret Christian teachings in terms of Chinese culture, two mistakes must be avoided.

One mistake is to stress the fundamental difference between Christianity and the Chinese culture which is largely Confucian; and Confucianism as it has developed through the ages is basically humanistic. To the Confucian School man can, if he will, develop to the highest humanity, by his own effort, by the power inherent in him as he is. Man can do his duty if he wishes to do it. Every man by his own efforts can develop to sainthood. This Pelagianism is not only found in Confucianism, if we pick the proof-texts, but also in Buddhism and Taoism; and even in the Mahayana Buddhism of the Pure Land Sect, which teaches salvation by Faith, there is still a remnant of that idea left. This is contrary to the Christian teaching that man depends upon God, whether you emphasize the complete depravity of man or not.

* *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 1938, p. 145.

This is putting the matter in an extreme form, and let us not pause to examine its truth or falsehood. Grant it to be true for the sake of argument. To interpret Christian teachings in Chinese thought-forms does not imply the belief that Chinese moral and religious ideas are inherently Christian. If there be any element in the Chinese culture incompatible with the basic teachings of Christianity, replace it. But Christ has not come to destroy, but to fulfill. To replace a flaw in a picture so as to bring out better the beauty of the picture is to fulfill its intention, to fill it full with the beauty had in mind for it by the painter. Chinese culture is not Christian, but it can be christianized. Our question is how.

The other mistake made in the attempt to interpret Christianity in terms of Chinese culture, often with the best of intentions and by the finest of scholars, is to read too much into Chinese ideas or to put too generous a connotation on some of the Chinese terms used. As instances I may refer to Legge and Ross of the 19th century and Bruce and Rawlinson of the 20th. It is not polite to mention writers still living.

The inaccuracy of some of the Chinese terms is well known. The character *tien*, usually translated into English as "Heaven" with a capital H, may mean one of several things. The Chinese language is a living language and it has been so for at least 4,000 years. Chinese literature has a long history. Unless the word is put in its proper context, and unless we know the background of the writer who uses it, we can make the term mean almost anything, at least the thing we intend it to mean, not necessarily the thing the author originally intended it to mean. This applies to a number of terms the proper interpretation of which is essential to the understanding of Chinese philosophy and religion. I will not multiply my illustrations.

By a generous interpretation of some of the terms in the Chinese language and by reading, perhaps unconsciously, some of our own ideas into some of the passages in Chinese philosophical and religious literature, we can make Chinese culture tell our own story. This is especially true when we translate Chinese into another language, particularly into one of the European languages. Thereby we commit a fallacy in reasoning, the fallacy of translation, which is the most vicious species of the fallacy of quotation, for in translating an author you say more effectively to your reader that it is he who says it. Such translated works are proof-texts *par excellence*. Beware such fallacies in the field of Chinese classical writings. The most eminent sinologues are not the least sinners in this respect. But who will cast the first stone?

One way to guard ourselves against this danger of being misled by well-intentioned translators is not to trust unduly the dictionary or commentary. Dictionaries and commentaries are made for man. They are mere tools and in themselves they are dead and do not speak, still less answer back. The essential thing is to get into the spirit of the term or of the passage, *die Durchsichtigkeit des Ganzen*, as the German puts it, and this can be done only by entering into the spirit of the author. Even reading the text in its original, it behooves us

sometimes to bear in mind a saying by Mencius, and for this audience I am afraid I have to use Legge's translation:

"Those who explain the Odes may not insist on one term so as to do violence to a sentence, nor on a sentence so as to do violence to the general scope. They must try with their thoughts to meet that scope, and then we shall apprehend it. If we simply take single sentences, there is that in the ode called 'The Milky Way':

'Of the black haired people of the remnant of Chow,
There is not half a one left.'

If it had been really as thus expressed, then not an individual of the people of Chow was left."

Mencius here uses the argument of *reductio ad absurdum* with people who insist on the literal interpretation of passages from a text. He is discussing here the interpretation of the ancient odes of China. Many religious ideas must needs be expressed in poetical form. Great truths are not prosaic.

Entering Into the Spirit of Another Culture.

In interpreting the Christian teachings and institutions in terms of another culture the important thing is first of all to enter into the spirit of that culture. The more complex that culture and the longer its history, the more important this is. It is always possible to search out similarities and dissimilarities between Christianity and another system of ethical and religious teaching. It is interesting for a student of religions to do that and it is often done. It was more often done seventy to fifty years ago. It was at that time the method and the technique of the student of Comparative Religion, so-called. It was considered scientific. Is it not the scientific method to gather data, to classify, to compare, and reclassify by singling out the resemblances and differences, and then draw some generalizations as the laws of the science, the science of religion? Such generalizations are of use, if their limitations are borne in mind. But generalizations are man-made and subjective. They imply a criterion or criteria of judgment and evaluation. It is not here supposed for a moment that such subjective criteria are avoidable. Every mind has its subjective side. And in every study we almost instinctively compare. The mind is allured and strongly attracted to it. But similarities and dissimilarities are apt to be what we look for, and in scientific studies we do look for something or else our research would be in vain. But comparison is in the realm of abstractions, and in the study of religions and culture abstraction is misleading, to say the least. Culture is organic. Religion is interesting because it is living. We do not go the whole way with Henri Bergson in deprecating abstraction. Every concept is abstract. Every science is abstract, simply because its method is conceptual. What is the use of quarreling with our own tool? But we must bear constantly in mind its limitations, and bear in mind, too, the subject matter of our study. We compare trees and animals, but the trees and animals we compare are dead, not the trees growing on the hillside or the animals in their natural habitat. Religions and cultures must be studied

in their natural habitat. Religious ideas and cultural elements must be considered in their proper context. It is fatal, for instance, to compare "thirst" as a translation of the Buddhist term *Tanha* with "thirst" in "hunger and thirst after righteousness" in the Beatitude. Hence, I submit, there cannot be any more fruitful study of comparative Religion than the study of comparative biographies.

In our attempt to interpret Christianity in terms of Chinese culture, therefore, we would avoid the comparative method except sometimes by way of digression. We would rather try to enter as much as possible into the spirit of Chinese culture and of the various religious and social as well as intellectual traditions that have in the long ages been incorporated into that culture, to see whether there is there something congenial to the Christian outlook on life and whether there are elements in it which may, without offending the sensibility of the Chinese people (and for that matter the sensibility of any people with good taste), be utilized as a medium of expression, as points of contact, in presenting the Christian teachings and institutions to the Chinese. For this purpose we must take the Chinese culture on its higher levels, without being oblivious to its dark aspects which, of course, are there.

Universality of the Christian Religion and Its Local Adaptation.

By way of illustration of our general position let us take a few instances.

First, worship. The form of worship has not been developed in Chinese religion, be it Confucian, Buddhist, or Taoist. It has its simplicity, even dignity, but of variety and beauty there is little. This is an area of religious life for creativeness. Of course, pioneer missionaries have had to introduce the forms with which they are familiar and in which their spiritual genius feels most at home. Much of that we in China have learned to love and perhaps will keep, but much of it is also unnatural to our sense of propriety. For instance, what is the natural posture when a Chinese of culture prays to God? My old culture would not permit me to keep my seat while speaking to my father, but my son would talk to me while he is lying down on a couch and I standing. It is a new day in China; it is the day of the passing of Chinese culture, which we seek to conserve by consecrating it to Christianity.

Shall we, then, appoint a committee of the churches in China to prepare liturgies in Chinese forms with detailed rubrics? Yes, but only as an *interim* measure. Liturgies must grow spontaneously. Foster the worshipful spirit and cultivate the worshipful life, and Chinese liturgies will spring up "as the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou canst not tell whence it cometh." And they will assume Chinese forms when they do come. A committee, even though 100% Chinese, would not bring that about any more than such a committee could sit down and write hymns of praise. Committee work is seldom poetical and inspired.

I will not dwell on such minor matters as rushing in and out of the church, our Father's House, for public worship, as if we were going to a theatre, or at

the beginning of the service of the Solemnization of Matrimony when all guests are invited to the happy occasion, to have the minister publicly put the question, "if any man can show just cause, why the man and woman may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak," a question which could very well be posted earlier as it is usually done and suffice. In the presence of God the Creator and Ruler of the Universe let there be more dignity and reverence. Public worship is not a colonial township meeting.

On the other hand, I do not recommend the introduction of the Buddhist rosary beads into Christian practices or the Buddhist lotus as the stand of the cross on the altar. It is amazing that a fervent student of Buddhism in China, an author of a much quoted book, should take the lotus flower only as a symbol of purity without remembering that the idea of birth by the lotus in the Pure Land is an insult to womanhood, entirely un-Christian in its implication. The principle of adaptation has its limits. What would the non-Christian think of our worship, for instance, if the melody of an indecent folk song should be adapted to a Christian hymn or chant and sung in Church? Art for art's sake is not always a good motto, not for the Church.

Turn for a moment now to the organization of the church. For life and work, not as church polity or for ecclesiastical administration, the circuit, the parish, and the diocese may not fit in entirely with the Chinese social structure, the clan, the community, the village. The Chinese are the most social animals. Their social units and their age-long social fabric are not to be brushed aside by the Christian Church without careful consideration. No wonder Christianity has been called a foreign religion. Time does not permit the development here of my idea of the four-center Church in China.

As to the reconstruction of theology for its effective presentation to the Chinese intelligentsia and for the edification of the Chinese people, there is time only for one or two observations.

It is painful to be reminded of the controversy over the Chinese term for God which raged over a century, two hundred years ago. Any one interested in this may consult the over 600 manuscripts in the Widener Library in Harvard University. True, *Shang-ti* is a "pagan term" because it is used in the Confucian Classics. But *Tien Chu* is no better, being a Buddhist term for very inferior gods. Our concern is not the term used or even the idea of God in Chinese religion or philosophy. You cannot find the Christian God in Chinese literature but you can find suggestions of Him here and there. The Chinese could not have groped for Him even in the dark without being granted a glimpse of His glory during all those millenia. But we are not looking for similarities. We search for a kindred spirit, and we find it in the Chinese ethical conception of the universe. The world is a stage fit for moral struggle. We cannot be wrong when we stand for the true, the good, and the beautiful. There is nothing to fear when we follow the light we see. There is purpose and direction in history and in the universe. This is not necessarily Christian, but it is something Christianity would find congenial. The Chinese through the ages could not have sought God, had they not already found Him.

Take also the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is dangerous to emphasize the idea that God assumed human form and walked the earth at a certain time. It sounds familiar to the Chinese ear, but what he hears may not be what the Christian preacher wants to say. We should not begin with "The Word was made flesh" but with "In the beginning was the Word," and then lead to the inevitable Christian conclusion that He was made man. We in China today do not have the gnostic background to combat as did the Christians in the first century. The Chinese can understand the meaning of the doctrine of the Incarnation. His own culture has taught him that between the heavenly and the human there is no unbridgeable gulf, but on the contrary that they belong together. Again, we preach there a new unique doctrine in a perfectly congenial atmosphere. Do not begin by telling the Chinese that the Incarnation is a mystery. It is only a lame excuse for a poorly prepared sermon on Christmas Day. The Chinese Christians will know it as a mystery when they have understood and received it.

Church Fathers and theologians have tried to expound the doctrine of the Trinity by analogies and have not met with great success. Let us not, then, try to find an analogy for this doctrine in Chinese religion. It is *the* Christian doctrine and it is unique. It must be taught and it must be learned and understood. But we have no need of putting it at the beginning of our catechism as has often been done. The logical order is not always the natural order. Let it be the consummation of our Christian experience in the Church in China.

An Adventure in Faith.

All these questions that we have barely touched and many others which we do not have time to mention must be thought through and some daring experiments in Christian thinking and Christian living must be undertaken in China in order to have a more effective presentation of the Christian message to the Chinese people and to get the Christian Church rooted in Chinese soil. There is no insinuation here that the Church is not going to take root in Chinese soil anyway. The Spirit of God works in ways beyond our understanding and in spite of our weaknesses and mistakes. But with the new China challenging the Church with a task unequalled in history since the acceptance of Christianity by the Emperor Constantine, and in a world situation at least as serious as any that has confronted Christians before, we are called upon to make an adventure in faith. We are confident that truth will triumph in the end, particularly in China where there is a great deal of common sense in store. Taking the Chinese as they have been and still are with their cultural heritage, one cannot help believing that they make the most natural Christians. But we must make hay when the sun still shines. We have no time to waste in this new day. We must make our work more effective and our preaching better understood. The Chinese need Christianity, but the Christian Church also needs the Chinese. When Christian teachings are interpreted in terms of Chinese culture, a new aspect of our religion may be brought into prominence by the Chinese emphasis. We may then have a Chinese theology as we have had Greek theology and Latin theology and European and American theology, not to divide the church in China from the church in other lands, but

to enrich the Christian heritage by bringing to it the best that we have inherited from our past. The Church may assume a new shape, find a new expression, according to the Chinese genius for social living. By this I am not referring to church polity. I refer only to church organization. It is not essential to have the same church organization when its polity remains unchanged.

A new glorious day has dawned, especially for China. Let us take heart, adventure for God, and attempt great things for Him. When we Chinese Christians look back upon the achievements of the pioneering missionaries in the long by-gone days our hearts are filled with gratitude. But we are being called to new tasks, to build upon the foundations they have laid, to be sure, but by God's grace also to erect a superstructure they in their days could not have dreamed of. For although they have obtained a good report through faith, yet they have not received the promise, which, allow me to say, is the Christianization of China, and the bringing to the altar of God the best in Chinese culture as the tribute from that great nation in the Far East with its long history, the longest the world has ever seen. "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Therefore compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and entering into communion with them, "let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Let us attempt daring things for God and for His Church in China.

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